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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how postmodern ideas might be used to change the nature and the practice of educational-leadership research. It draws on a series of fragmented vignettes to argue that a postmodern approach can uncover the gray areas of scholarship. The article examines the use of the word "oxymoron," discusses the nature of refined thought, and explores the influence of autobiography during the process of research and writing. It details the six postmodern signposts: (1) the "don't know" responses that are rigorously edited out of texts; (2) the significance of contexts and their importance in understanding instructional leadership; (3) the need for learning in a community with no preassigned roles or areas of expertise; (4) the recognition that some rules need to be broken so as to recapture knowledge that is lost in standard protocols; (5) the sharing of data and the need to democratize knowledge, accomplished in part by minimizing the privileges accorded to the researcher and author; and (6) the presence of multiple realities, discourses, and moralities that everyone brings to their role in education. The text concludes with a discussion of what constitutes a postmodernist analysis, claiming that it is a lived philosophy based on epistemological and ontological assumptions. Contains 35 references. (RJM)

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Postmodern Educational Leadership Research as a Leadership Substitute: Apology, 23d

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Pre-Post metanarrative voices

In writing this paper, I discovered that the most accessible path to postmodern educational leadership research for me, and perhaps for others, traveled directly through my doing mainstream research projects. There are , of course, innumerable paths to postmodernism through philosophy, politics, and humanities. What is often missed in the study of postmodernism, however, is that postmodern conditions predate any and all of its founders. In looking back at my own work in the field of educational leadership research, I could remember what was excluded, deleted, and considered to be insignificant at the time. Quite literally, through postmodern ideas, I could reclaim "the `silenced' data and the `deleted' truths of practice" (Furman-Brown, personal communications, April, 1999). "What postmodern research does not do is try to resolve paradoxes, find right answers, or attempt to write and publish The Truth. Rather, it is open-ended and indeterminant" (Furman-Brown, April, 1999). If so, then postmodern educational leadership research deliberately makes the weaker arguments the stronger (Plato, Apology, 23d). This study demonstrates through a series of fragmented vignettes how postmodern ideas might be used to change not only the nature of how to do educational leadership research, but also how to practice our profession.

Asserting the traditional, stronger arguments

There are traditional leadership signposts embedded in the dominant [stronger] socio-cultural beliefs, built around the separation created by the deliberate meaning of the term, the REAL WORLD. Inside the real world, behaviors and discourse are colorfully spiced with military, business, and sports analogies. In the real world of education, leadership has been characterized as being decisive, making the right choices, speaking unequivocally, being effective and efficient, and most significantly, getting the job done.

In educational leadership research, there is a recognized set of dominant [stronger] practices which parallel the above characteristics. Among them are reviewing literature, citing sources, articulating problems, issues or questions, writing with topic sentences, complete thoughts, logical

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arguments, supporting details, and drawing conclusions and summaries.

The postmodern turn questions the status ascribed to these beliefs and activities as well as the social and intellectual consequences of reflexively following these leadership signposts.

Finding a topic inside of a word

It was Fenwick English who offered the word "oxymoron" in relationship to postmodern educational leadership research. To which I respond, postmodern educational leadership research is indeed an oxymoron, but maybe not. That's pretty much how I choose to see most ideas and practices in education; that is, I choose not to focus exclusively on the polarities of oxymorons, but rather to search for what may be between-the-lines, or the so-called gray areas of leadership.

Of course, in doing scholarship, to be safe, I conducted literature searches on the word "oxymoron," noting interesting references in business and educational communications by Warren Blumenfeld (1986) [e.g., full professor, statistical significance, school lunch] as well as in psychiatry (Giovacchini, 1995). There were a number of passages on schizophrenia which struck a chord with some of my own experiences in the field of educational leadership:

> "These patients may view themselves as omnipotent and grandiose, yet at the same time lead a miserable, drab existence. Primitive parts of the personality may feel alive and powerful, whereas the ego is viewed as dead -- the fundamental oxymoron of the living dead" (p. 333).

Of course, that was *his*, the psychiatrist's, diagnosis, not the lived experiences of the patients for whom "there is no such thing as an oxymoron" (p. 336). Giovachini recognized the "special difficulties for therapists because they cannot intuitively respond to such an [i.e., the patients'] orientation" (p. 336).

In speaking specifically about one creative patient, Giovacchini wrote:

"At first I tried to comfort him or make some `helpful' interpretation. On occasion my words brought him to another, more physically comfortable level, but he reviled me for what I had done. He insisted that I had deserted him because I could not stand the pain. I realized he was right and that my interventions were to give myself relief by making him feel better.

I soon learned that I had to be with him on his horrible island....This was a painful experience, which we both had to survive. My higher level, civilized interpretations did not belong in this violent, prehistoric setting" (p. 342).

I reread these quotes again and again. Each time making a nonspecific connection to my own work as a researcher of what is happening inside of schools, especially as it relates to the practices of educational leadership. To what extent do these psycho-medical metaphors capture the lived experiences of the researcher-practitioner relationships? On what horrible island do I experience pain? Am I reviled for my interventions? I thought about the intensive therapeutic care offered by dissertation advisors and at Principal Centers around the world. I am knowledgeable and skilled in educational leadership, and I think ready to assume professional leadership responsibilities as teacher and researcher. But, I am not licensed to practice therapy or ordained to preach from a pulpit. How then do I gain access to his [sic] horrible island? How do my "outside" research methods, data analysis, and critique enter the "constituted inside" experiences and history of others? How do I practice moral leadership? What is the oxymoronic aspect inside postmodern educational leadership research? Are there possibilities for intersubjective relationships? Is there a leadership substitute response to some of these questions? Let's begin again.

Looking at art from a distance

"Another pigeonhole: 'experimental' or even 'unintelligible.' I recall one prissy literary type

who sniffed, `As *I* understand it, an experimental writer is one whose experiment has failed.' Such comments refer to the `cut-up' technique, which is merely an application of the montage method (in 1959, already old hat in painting, as the painter Brion Gysin pointed out at the time) to writing" (Burroughs, 1984/1991, p. 266).

During the late 50s and 60s, Gysin collaborated with Burroughs on literary works and films using the `cutup method' in which excerpts from literature [from Kafka to Shakespeare] and pop culture were randomly pasted into Burroughs' stories. According to the critic Skerl (1985), Burroughs developed a theory of the cutup as a way to liberate himself -- as well as the reader -- from the control that words and images have on the mind (p. 49). "For Burroughs as an artist, the cutup is an impersonal method of inspiration, invention, and an arrangement that redefines the work of art as a process that occurs in collaboration with others and is not the sole property of artists" (Skerl, pp. 49-50). As a "tool," however, Burroughs eventually abandoned his use of the cutup.

Of course, once Burroughs understood why he needed to bring discontinuity into his stories, he no longer needed to rely upon an artificial/superficial "tool" to depict the postmodern conditions of life. Surely, educators, no less than artists, need theories to reconceptualize teaching, learning, researching, and leading. We need theories more than new tools.

* * *

In 1958, Universal Studios grew impatient with Orson Welles' directing and editing of the film Touch of Evil. Fearing that he was ruining whatever commercial success there might be in this B movie, the Studio fired him before he could finish the project. Welles left, but not before writing and sending Universal a 58 page memo detailing how to complete the editing of the film. The memo was ignored, the film completed and released. Even without Welles' final touches, the movie drew

strong praise from a number of New Wave French film makers, Jean Luc Goddard and Francois Truffaut. In the mid-1990s a film producer, Rick Schmidlin "discovered" the Welles' memo and then persuaded the same Universal Studios to re-edit Touch of Evil. A noted film editor, Walter Murch, was hired. He followed Welles' instructions to the letter, but was only able to re-splice the original movie because there were no out takes or restored footage ever found. Although the narrative changes were subtle, Welles' technique of "cross cutting" became more pronounced, contrasting back and forth images one after another highlighting and blurring the harsh differences of life (www.filmvault.com, 1998).

Imagine writing a 58 page memorandum on how to continue editing a film en media res! What insight into the artistic processes; a particular theory about a particular film. Not 58 pages on film-making-editing, but on editing the specific movie Touch of Evil.

* * *

Usually when doing my own edits and rewrites, random "cutup" thoughts or "metaphors," such as in the above stories, would eventually fade out of the manuscript. I would accept them as part of my "pre-rational" thinking about my topic. As long as these actions/thoughts remained at a distance, it would not be too upsetting when the moment arrived to press the "block" and "delete" keys. But why do random thoughts, loose associations not make it into the "final" educational leadership draft? Are these ideas, partial stories, irrelevant, albeit intriguing distractions, to our work? If we take these thoughts literally, where might they lead us? Towards or away from discovering our own educational stories of teaching, learning, and leading? Have we in educational leadership borrowed so many frameworks, lenses, perspectives that we have become fearful of any "foreign" approach to our work?

Listserve Conversations

In mid-November, 1998, there was a shortlived, but interesting exchange among a handful of AERA, Division A Listserve members on the meanings of postmodernism. I remember one of the opening quotes, "Postmodernism is a word that is out of control" (Shepherd@ASU.edu). No! Yes. Still, while in the process of writing this paper, I was anxious to glean insights from the discussion. "Perhaps the safest observation that can be made of it [postmodernism] is that it represents what comes after something called Modernism." That thought was repeated a number of times by different participants, but I didn't think it was true. I didn't think that postmodernism was a recent phenomenon, invented by the French to confuse us, but rather a radically contingent diagnosis of the world held by some and not by others (Biesta, personal email communication, September, 1997). Postmodernism just is.

Towards the end (November 18, 1998) of the five day conversation, Chuck Fazzaro (Chuck-Fazzaro@umsl.edu) wrote about leadership, its responsibilities and morality, concluding that "deconstruction is another `tool' that needs to be made available to education." I signed off still wondering where educators' minds were vis a vis the distinction Burroughs made with respect to theory and "tools," for himself and his readers.

More Traditional False Starts

My own readings and writings on postmodernism seemed to return to the themes of alternative epistemologies and ontologies. This is philosophy, not educational leadership. I doubt whether the traditional ways of knowing, such as philosophy, ideology or empiricism could ever lead to deep understandings and educational change in the field of educational leadership. But, do I believe this because of the nature of educational leadership itself, because of the demographic

characteristics of practitioners in school leadership roles, or is it me? Is there a predominant temperament or disposition towards action which perhaps mitigates against traditional scholarly ways of knowing? Along those lines, I recall the well-known characteristics of leadership "success" mentioned above, namely, being decisive and getting the job done. How do these dispositions conspire to limit postmodern meanings of educational leadership? Is there an alternative path to postmodernism through educational leadership research?

Pomores7

As I write with a word processor, I name and number my drafts: pomo [postmodern], res [research], 7 [seventh draft]. During the first seven drafts of this paper, I reflected on the specific limitations and constraints imposed on educational leadership research because of Western Rational philosophy, ideology, and empiricism. That discussion which was meant to be the *table setter* for my own ideas on postmodern educational leadership research expanded way beyond the scope of a single paper. I decided I needed other points of view. So, I shared a draft with Joe Berger and Scott Bauer, colleagues in my department and researchers in organizational theory whom I respect. Their comments especially on the *table setting* sections challenged my arguments about constraints and limitations. Specifically, they offered more expansive notions of doing research inside of traditional, modern paradigms. Joe suggested I follow the alternative paths of values and art, while Scott wrote, "I just don't buy it." His critique was not unlike the two recent articles written by Mark Constas (1998a, 1998b) in Educational Researcher . Essentially, the criticism boils down to postmodernism becoming its own metanarrative, and, thus, vulnerable to the very same criteria critique it makes against modern methods and practices. To me, this category mistake is not inevitable; it comes from a misreading of postmodernism -- but who's responsible for this

misreading, the reader or the writer? Are they separate?

"Begin here"

It was only two words written on page 7 by another UNO colleague, Caroline Cody. It said, "begin here." I stopped her in the hall outside my office and asked, "What duh ya mean?" "The beginning didn't engage me." "Oh." I went home and began reading on page 7. Poof, in one keystroke Western philosophy, ideology, and empiricism vanished. I liked it. But what does that say about all the thousands of *table setting* pages you and I have both read and written?

And what if I/you wanted to retrieve some wonderful points just deleted?

block, delete, forget
block, delete, regret
back and forth from
forget and regret

Beginning Again

Left to discover an alternative theoretical perspective, I looked at my own work and what I had learned while doing educational leadership research. Although autobiography is centered on self-expression, my experiences with others suggested that I had taken a relational outlook to the meaning of self. Nevertheless, how could an intimate telling of what I had learned while doing educational leadership research over the past ten years rise to a level of significance and social relevancy on a par with Western philosophy [or even Aesthetics]? From 1966 to the present, ERIC documents contained 338 references to "autobiography," [twenty-nine percent had been published]. When the word "leadership" was added to the search, the number dropped precipitously to eleven, and only one published article. I don't like the sound of this.

Perhaps there is some room here for setting the table?

In the beginning... asking different questions

Beginnings "start from where we are, at the time we are there" (Toulmin, 1990). As in life, there are no blank slates in research. Where we begin and how we ask questions are important, historically and culturally -- including the philosophical, ideological, and empirical legacies of modernity. Postmodernism may begin in empiricism, that is, through studying what is happening inside of schools, but it also seeks to offer different mindsets and ways of teaching and learning which lead to new and different futures -- as yet unforeseen, as yet *unempirical*. Where education today is not meeting its social obligations to educate all children, the path towards unpredictability, along with past and present empirical predictability, offers renewed hope for the future.

Beginning Again, Part One

If you can forego setting the table, then feel free to skip this entire section and proceed to Part Two below.

There was nothing unusual in my education or in how I developed an interest in becoming an educational researcher. The concepts in organizational theories I studied were based on trying to complete a picture, descriptively and normatively, following logic derived from the program of Rational Philosophy. For much of our history, the purpose of Western Philosophy has been to reconcile dialectical differences in order to arrive at certain knowledge, a higher truth or contemplative state. Plato's Republic, Kant's synthetic a priori, and Hegel's consciousness in the phenomenology of mind are prime examples of reaching for this dialectical and universal end. In organizational theory, researchers begin with formal structures and polices and then append onto them social, political, economic, and cultural explanations -- discretely or in some linear combinations. It was not until I read Meyer and Rowan's 1977 analysis of institutional environments

that this correlational-causal approach was challenged. Their discussion did not attempt to either append or reconcile the disparities between structures and policies on the one hand and practices and professional beliefs on the other. Their "logic of confidence" left an opening, a space between structures, thinking, and actions.

Other researchers previously had described informal organizational networks, but for them, the purpose had always been to fill in gaps or complete a picture. The informal shadowed the formal not unlike Plato's shadows on the cave wall. That is, appearances mirrored reality. Meyer and Rowan described disconnected realities, leaving space across policies, behavioral events, and everyday practices. Through these openings, a whole generation of oxymoronic research was born, spawning concepts such as loose coupling, organized anarchies, and garbage cans for decision-making -- along with a host of other metaphors and symbols used to described organizational realities (Morgan, 1986).

In doing quantitative research, statistical significance became a proxy for judging whether the research designs, questions, and findings were valid.[1] Researchers looked for statistical differences in every imaginable setting, controlling for or asserting away [e.g., claiming all things being equal, for purposes of this study only] other potential "causes" of differences. Yet, even with these methodological delimitations in place, published studies could not predict much of the

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[1] Constas (1998a, 1998b) identified three methodological problems with postmodern research: the emphasis on technical issues over substantive issues; privileging local knowledge over other ways of knowing; and, the lack of rigorous criteria for establishing validity. I like his skeptical tone, but he continues to make a category mistake of turning postmodernism into a metanarrative and then judging postmodern practices by traditional social science criteria. I don't think that's justified, and I hope that this essay can demonstrate how the weaker arguments, such as "following your nose," can become the stronger.

variances, explained or otherwise. Instead of answering research questions, studies inevitably admitted to limitations in both theory and method. As for what were being reported, the results were often uninteresting, -- i.e., prima facie obvious, or even misleading -- this was especially so in my own educational leadership research. In one study, I found that inexperienced principals did not admit to any notions of role ambiguity or uncertainty[2]. There I was at the University of New Orleans teaching aspiring administrators to venture into ambiguous, uncertain and contradictory school worlds, the very conditions statistically denied by new principals. Surely that's an interesting finding, but was it accurate? If so, what could I do with these findings? At the time, I wasn't prepared to address the issue of research results and future actions. Similarly, when studying change and innovation in a large urban district, I found that practicing administrators eschewed knowledge and understanding of change strategies[3]; yet these same central office administrators were designated by their own systems' colleagues, the media, and the public as being educational innovators. I felt caught inside of a Kafkaesque world, a world where we mis[label]measure men, women, and children (Gould 1981). From my own career perspective, I began to lose enthusiasm for continuing to do empirical research in the "real world" with its language of leadership "success." It was exhausting and debilitating, and the findings were certainly "not counterintuitive" (Lomotey, 1995, p. 3).

Beginning Again, Part Two

In the following sections, I will describe six postmodern signposts, vignettes of what I was learning while doing educational leadership research. Inside of these vignettes are unresolved issues

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[2]Bogotch & Riedlinger (1993)

[3]Bogotch, Brooks, McPhee, & Riedlinger (1995)

- - which I express through my teaching and researching as leadership substitutes. By offering personal examples, I hope to make explicit the doubts, questions, choices, decisions, and learning which come from doing educational research -- and to demonstrate how these create opportunities for new leadership and research possibilities to emerge from today's realities of schooling.

I see these postmodern educational leadership signposts as deliberately making the weaker arguments the stronger (Plato's Apology, 23d). In contrast, the "strong" leadership argument has been constructed to resolve paradoxes, make unequivocal statements, solve problems, find the right answers, write and publish the truth, and, most frequently in practice, get the job done. We all recognize these well-known signposts as characteristics of leadership "success." Postmodern leadership signposts recognize paradoxes and oxymorons as part of our everyday lived experiences. But, the beauty of postmodern research is not to force a choice between the polarities or to rationally settle their differences; but rather, postmodern research offers methods to study and act upon the multiple, between-the-lines realities, the so-called gray areas of leadership, sometimes referred to in the literature as leadership substitutes (Howell, 1997; Maxcy, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1992).

The following sections present a series of between-the-lines stories, my personal telling of what I have learned by doing educational leadership research and the doubts that have surrounded my practices from the beginning until now. Through these actions, I have come to discover aspects of postmodernism. Sometimes, these signposts were evident at the beginning of a research project; other times, they were not evident until years later; and still, at other times, all that remains of these postmodern signposts are what I can remember after the cutting, pasting, and editing stopped.

Signpost No. 1: The DK Option

My first research project was my dissertation, a study of school managerial control of

curriculum and instruction. As I measured the different dimensions of control, I discovered that inside of each dimension were discretionary practices, expressed semantically through the use of qualitative language, personal preferences and priorities, individual choices and decisions, unexplained statistical variance, and measurable "don't know" [DK] responses. Although the research design was quantitative, my discovery of these interpretable and qualitative aspects of control raised for the first time for me how unanticipated questions about school administration -- specifically, what is *not* known about control processes were just as important as the statistical findings. As so many of us have asked before, could the amount of unexplained variance be more significant than what was measured as statistically significant? In my desire to measure and label factors of control, did I overemphasize measurable variables while understating the prevalence of other leadership substitutes (Howell, 1997)? Or, in medical terms, did the placebo have the same positive effects as the treatment?

The dissertation format required that I report what was measurable, known, and what I had learned. In draft after draft, my ongoing questions and doubts were slowly, yet inexorably, being edited *out of the text* in order to demonstrate the "validity" of my findings. I was engaged in an other-self-reassuring process, which I later discovered was taking me further from the messy world of practice to a simpler, more understandable world of structures and words.

Although I was committed to understanding managerial control through my research design and statistical methods, I, nevertheless, could not ignore the qualitative-interpretative side of the construct and how it affected leadership in schools. For me, discretion and the qualities of control now included "don't know" responses. I concluded, halfheartedly, that "by the book" practices did not explain the hows and whys of "controlling" curricular and instructional tasks as staff and

curriculum development or teacher evaluation. What I didn't say at the time was that the "DK option," that is, what respondents admitted not knowing offered many alternative paths for reconstructing administrative knowledge, experiences and practices inside of schools. I didn't know it then, but the study planted numerous seeds of doubt about understanding administrative practices, doubts which I kept inside of me for years.

It was not until years later that I published the findings of the dissertation in a refereed journal.[4] I believe now that there were deep- seated reasons for my delay, namely that what I had written did not fit into the prescribed research design because I hadn't edited out all of the extraneousness of my thinking. My argument was not clear enough and the conclusions too indeterminate -- not befitting an expert's knowledge of the topic. Still, at some point in the future, I knew I would have to re-examine the DK options as well as the editorial choices and decisions I had made.

Signpost No 2: The "Significance" of Contexts

Sometimes we stumble into understanding. In the late eighties, I had read two important studies on the topic of context: Wimpelberg Teddlie, & Stringfield (1989) argued for contextual sensitivity in interpreting effective schools research; and, Hallinger and Murphy (1986) found that instructional leadership behaviors were contextually different. Along with some colleagues, I wanted to extend the meaning of context beyond measures of individually discrete variables and apply that knowledge to educational leadership research.[5] The original design used a survey to quantitatively measure contextual differences. We surveyed over a hundred new principals who were

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[4]Bogotch, Williams, & Hale (1995)

[5]Bogotch, Keaster, Baldwin, & Wonycott (1995)

taking a statewide internship program in Louisiana. After following established procedures and methods, no statistical significance on *any* of the discrete contextual variables, such as race, gender, geographic location, size of school, school levels, etc, were evident, alone or in combination. I couldn't believe the findings; they were intuitively and experientially wrong. Our design, methods, and procedures had failed us.

Here good fortune, a little *mazel*, entered the story. Because many of the survey questions called for open-ended responses, we could re-analyze the principals' responses qualitatively. In addi tion, we had continuing access to our sample so that it was possible to interview a subset for follow-up responses. We redesigned the study to include an interview protocol. During the new analysis, we listened to personal stories and were able to hear how contextual variables such as race, gender, and geopolitics influenced principals' thinking and practices. We labeled our accidentally -discovered method contextual "storylines." Inside of the storylines were contextual influences and geopolitical interpretations of realities -- some educative, some miseducative. For example, we described the use and misuse of affirmative action policies in hiring new principals, how individuals were constitutionally protected, and how individuals knew why a woman or minority would or would not get a particular job. The storylines brought to life the layers and particularities of contextual dynamics and differences across school districts as well as inside of individual schools.

We learned how local practices evolved from socially constructed, historical patterns of thinking and behaving. From these descriptions, we could see how and why some individuals benefit, intentionally or not, because of their group memberships. Once the door to personal lived experiences was opened, then issues of power and knowledge came together and to the front of our analysis. At that point, inside the political processes, the questions we asked not only revealed

contextual issues in current practice, but also questioned and challenged them. How educational leadership researchers see their roles and choices [i.e., questions] determine their subsequent political and leadership actions. Critical researchers explicitly acknowledge a political role as part of their research practices (Gitlin, 1994). In this regard, educational leadership researchers are still learning.

Signpost No. 3: Learning in a community way outside of preassigned roles and areas of expertise

At different points in time, I accede to an assigned reality, one constructed by others. When I view my role in teaching and research as simply measuring and reporting empirical findings of the outside world, my participation in constructing knowledge remains passive. At other times, however, I actively seek to change the conditions in which I live and work, socially constructing more person ally preferable conditions.

My social interactions towards community building have centered around the relationships between pedagogy and educational leadership. The distance that exists between curriculum/instr uction and educational leadership never made sense to me. Working inside of a traditional educational leadership program, I invited specific individuals to join me in a teaching, learning, and research project. At first, each of us held onto our specific roles as experts. These roles offered status in the project. Working first individually and later as a group, we tried to understand the different theories and perspectives. We acquired new knowledge and began to challenge our previous knowledge and the theories of others. These interpretative learning sessions created role ambiguity as we challenged one anothers' expert knowledge. The tension created uncomfortable moments and threatened the dynamic of our community. But as we learned, our expert roles slowly began to dissolve into socially shared and constructivist knowledge. We still maintained roles and identities, just not the same ones with which we had begun. By breaking down some of the expert knowledge

boundaries, we freed ourselves to learn new ideas and how to know in new and different ways.

Postmodern perspectives have changed the learning curve as more and more disciplinary scholars challenge prior knowledge. Cyberspace scholars cross borders connecting history with popular culture with quantum physics. How much longer can the field of educational leadership bar the door to these constructivist learning possibilities?

Signpost No. 4: Deliberately Breaking Rules

Having learned that knowledge is often edited out of traditional research formats, that contextual differences influence thinking and practice, even though the results may not be statistically significant, and that learning outside of pre- assigned, expert roles and status creates both tensions as well as possibilities for new knowledge, I participated in a number of studies which deliberately broke some rules of data analysis. The first instance was a study that looked at personnel practices across four prototypical school systems.[6] We hypothesized contextual differences but assumed that both personnel knowledge and practices were being guided by rational processes described in classic texts on School Personnel Administration (e.g., Castetter, 1992). These rational processes follow a chronological progression from recruiting, interviewing, hiring, inducting, staff developing, evaluation, to, if necessary, terminating. In a survey, we asked principals in the four systems about best practices and reforms along this personnel continuum. When we calculated descriptive statistics, we found some trend differences in the mean scores and standard deviations [the latter term is one of Warren Blumenfeld's (1986) favorite oxymorons], but the design, method and sample size did not warrant conducting inferential testing of the data. Nevertheless, we were curious whether the personnel practices across the four school systems reflected the same underlying

[6]Bogotch, Gahr, & Rougelot (1996)

logic of rationality promoted by textbooks. We decided that we would ignore the statistical test assumptions of factor analysis, the distributive laws of central tendency, as well as the unambiguous error message flashing on the computer screen reminding us of our violations. We ran the tests with no restrictions but found no solutions, no convergence. So, the question of an underlying logic or randomness was still there.

At this point, we decided to force a solution, first creating a four factor model, to match the four systems in the data set, and then comparing it with a two-factor solution. We settled on two fictional worlds, a "professional hybrid model" combining local values with national reform efforts and a "competitive, expert model" combining local values with entrepreneurial efforts. We concluded that school principals were strongly influenced by their system's contexts, yet exhibited a "practitioner knowledge" different from any of the current practices enacted in their own systems.

To date, I have deliberately broken rules on two other occasions, both involving studies of urban school morality. In one collaborative study,[7] I [as the first author] constructed a meta-analytical world using three qualitative data sets, each taken from the same urban school district. The fiction here was that the participants were interacting with one another, as if it were one temporal-spatial data set rather than three. I described our methods honestly, offering justifications for breaking rules. It was our belief that we could describe a greater variety of narratives, including fragmented nonnarratives and voices, as resistant, discontinuous as well as patterned across the time and space of three data sets depicting urban practices.

The next study illustrated a twist on rule breaking research practices. In the previous examples, we had broken traditional rules of design and data analysis. Here, I [as the methodologist]

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[7]Bogotch, Miron, and Murry (1998)

broke a postmodern "rule." The quotation marks indicate that in postmodernism any rule may be problematic under changing conditions, even postmodern rules. Yet, when I deliberately privileged the voices of high school students in discussing the moral practices of educational leadership, reviewers returned negative comments, telling us that postmodernism could *never* privilege one voice over another. It was a transgression. But our purpose was to deliberately break a postmodern "rule" because student voices, especially students of color, are not often heard in leadership discourses.[8] We, collaboratively, took a strategic and political position, arguing for a political morality (Miron, 1997). Had we violated a logical tenet of postmodern thinking? On what criteria had we transgressed? Whose epistemology had we violated? Was it the epistemology of established rules, stable categories, and fixed principles? Once postmodernism and postmodern methods have been asserted, they, too, become the dominant and controlling criteria, and, thus, targets of critique.

In each of the above instances, I asked, who would publish the fiction as scholarship? There was no way to hide what had been done methodologically, nor would I want to: it was these violations of assumptions which had led us the more interesting results. But unlike fiction writers, can educational leadership researchers go too far afield, committing too great a violation? The answer to this question, too, becomes a substitute for leadership.

Signpost No. 5: Sharing Data

This next signpost addresses the separations among researchers, participants and readers. Each of these roles come with differential knowledge/political status [or lack of status]. Could we democratize the roles beyond traditional educational research practices? Could the privileges accorded to the researcher/author be minimized? It is the researcher who traditionally controls the

[8]Miron, Bogotch, & Biesta, (1999)

data and most of the interpretive theories. How could these restrictions be loosened? What resources would participants and readers need for knowledge/power? Are there theoretical approaches and methods which open up these possibilities beyond current research practices?

Again, my own learning is indebted to good fortune. As I have described elsewhere ,[9] I was sitting in a principal's office with a hand held tape recorder when a teacher walked in and began talking about a problem situation. I inquired if I should turn off the tape machine. The participants, who knew me well said no. So I recorded a "private conversation" in the principal's office.

In writing about this private conversation, I used the transcript verbatim in its entirety. I asked the participants to interpret and re-interpret what they said. I also selected an open-ended theoretical framework of pragmatic-communications theory which encourages writers and readers to look beyond just words for more cues in constructing meanings. I then sent drafts to numerous colleagues across the country for their interpretations. All of these multiple points of view were included in the draft of the manuscript. My expectation was that if I put in everything I knew pertaining to the situation, readers would know as much as I did and re-interpret the data for themselves.

Giving up sole authority to interpret the data represented one way of sharing power, acknowledging my position and fallibility, and asking for collaborative assistance. As I was writing that manuscript, I began to feel like a teacher and learner modeling constructivist learning and collaborative leadership while doing research. Are these practices postmodern? Is this a leadership substitute?

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[9]Bogotch (1997)

Signpost No. 6: Multiple realities, discourses, and moralities

My last signpost continues the theme of asking, what's moral about educational leadership practices. I began my search for moral answers with Dewey.[10] He wrote that all individuals come to schools with their own moralities, including those of transcendent beliefs. Once inside schools, however, I found evidence of different moralities based on contextual social dynamics. In a series of articles,[11] I tried to describe different aspects of moralities in context and practices as partial truths. These social interactions may influence participants in schools to act in less than morally educative ways. Individuals are influenced by their needs for new relationships, to get the job done efficiently, to react in a *quid pro quo* fashion towards others, to rely on stereotypical -socio-cultural prejudices, and to maintain structures and roles of authority and order (Miron, Bogotch, & Biesta, 1999). I also re-discovered socio-cultural spaces, DK options, among teachers, students and administrators. In these spaces, alternative ideas, different directions, new choices and decisions would be possible if only people inside of schools could learn from one another. My role as a researcher again mirrored my need to teach and lead others in listening carefully to different voices across contexts. I found that inside of everyday interactions, even private ones, there are learning opportunities for practicing educational leadership differently.

Ironically, these moral investigations offer critics of [postmodern] education with evidence of prevalent amoralities and immoralities in schooling, and then opportunities to advocate repressive rather than progressive policies. But what choice is there but to try to present research of peoples' lived experiences as places to begin and challenge educational leadership discourses ?

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[10]Bogotch & Taylor (1993)

[11]Bogotch & Roy (1996, 1995)

First Conclusion: Summary Points

The signposts represented new learning which began, and usually ended, in my doubts about the results of research studies as well as the traditional research methods I was taught to follow. Was it possible that unedited first drafts actually reflected different truths of everyday leadership practices from those remaining in sanitized manuscripts which were accepted for publication? Had I literally blocked and deleted truths in favor of a format that valued expert knowledge, continuity and clarity over substance? Would I ever be able to go back and re-claim these disassembled truths, for myself and for others? Probably not, but over time, I could begin to see how the dynamics of postmodern perspectives help us to learn to do research and leadership differently.

To do postmodern research is to anticipate new learning signposts, and to expect good fortune. To summarize the six postmodern leadership substitutes learned from doing research, I first had to recognize that the signposts traveled through traditional theory-based and skill-oriented research methods. However, by acknowledging qualitative language, "don't know" options, and data which did not fit, I discovered how discretionary leadership choices were part of the interactive social processes of decision-making, containing and creating cultural spaces for alternative practices on the part of both researchers and leadership practitioners (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1997). These spaces as opportunities also contributed to the second leadership substitute, that is, understanding that influences of contextual differences and storylines may not be statistically significant. The third leadership substitute sought to overcome the limitations established by expert knowledge and roles; thus, it becomes the responsibility of educational leadership to reveal these limits and suggest how they may be connected to other ways of knowing not centered solely in concepts of self. My own leadership actions led to new social relationships through collaboration and constructivist pedagogy.

The fourth leadership substitute was deciding to break some of the traditional research rules. The leadership research question here is how far such practices can extend the cultural and contextual borders. How do we construct leadership theory which seeks empirical validation of facts along with interpretative fictions? Breaking rules also raises questions of power and morality. In trying to be honest about methodological transgressions, I encounter negative and skeptical reactions from colleagues socialized to the norms of research and educational leadership practices. Thus, the fifth and sixth leadership substitutes involve sharing data, actively constructing conclusions, and presenting evidence of multiple discourses and multiple moralities. Here, I sought to broaden the activities of educational leadership research, methodologically by using mediated technologies to see discontinuous, fragmented realities and pedagogically by using a teaching/learning strategy that hears the voices of those usually not heard from in leadership discourses. One objective was to highlight the parallels between doing research, teaching, and the actual practices of leadership. By engaging interactively in methods of research, by demonstrating discretionary choices and decisions, such as breaking rules and sharing data, I hoped to demonstrate how doing educational leadership research could be more congruent with the lived experiences of educational leadership practitioners.

None of the signposts took a philosophical, ideological, or empirical approach to postmodernism, although philosophy, politics and empiricism were evident in each vignette. Postmodernism is a lived philosophy based on epistemological and ontological assumptions; it can be viewed as a radical ideology that deconstructs current knowledge and positions of privilege that have been established over centuries, and that are embodied in our educational institutions; moreover, postmodernism is relentlessly empirical, seeking to know what people are saying and doing moment by moment, then persisting to ask how and why.

Thus, doing postmodern educational leadership research is more than examining the contradictory polarities of oxymorons and paradoxes. It is about finding methods which reveal what are between the lines. I have an ethnic history that has historically survived by living between the lines. And so, it will not let me end even this essay with a neat summary or self justification. I have always seen "one more thing..." as "nagging concerns": nagging because they won't go away -- ever, and concerns because socially and historically, significant practices and ideas evoke reactions. Thus, bear with me, just a little longer, so I can end with a section filled with uncertain, Talmudic dialogue, that is, of nagging concerns requiring new educational leadership actions.

Second Conclusion: Nagging Concerns

I begin with the most benign concern and then move towards what I see as the most insidious concerns -- hoping not to whine or sound pessimistic.

1. Perhaps the postmodern signposts described here were not persuasive, or even postmodern. Without direct references to philosophy, the connections to postmodernism may have been too indistinct, too indefinite; without direct references to politics, the ideas here were not radical enough; and, perhaps, the empiricism of my autobiographical approach was too naked, too cliche, too personal, too local, or too concrete to relate to others educational researchers' experiences. Continuing, perhaps what I have written was self-indulgent [hedonistic? (Constas, 1998b)], if not anti-intellectual. How can autobiography, someone's personal experiences, compete with the weighty ideas of Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard -- none of whom were cited here? How can my strategies of collaborative research and constructivist pedagogy serve as a substitute to reading postmodern philosophy? Can there be deep knowledge of philosophical ideas through "power and method" (Gitlin, 1994) as practice, rather than as the close textual readings of philosophy? Was not the

short-lived Division A listserve debate on postmodernism (Nov., 1998) an object lesson that there is no substitute for textual readings? In response, I would argue for engaging in other ways of knowing, namely, doing educational leadership research from a postmodern perspective-- as an intellectual alternative to studying philosophy. I would encourage researchers to pursue their idiosyncratic ideas and disregard the jokes and hoaxes perpetrated in the name of postmodernism. At the same time, I would caution researchers to be as fearful of postmodern police as they might already be of their modernist counterparts.

2. The second nagging concern also revolves around mischaracterizations of the term postmodernism, intentional or otherwise. This concern arises along the same lines as the illusiveness (Sergiovanni, 1987) and seductiveness (Foster, 1995) attached to the meanings of leadership. The epistemological and ontological assumptions of postmodernism do not fit most peoples' views of reality. Even so insightful a thinker/writer as Cornel West (1994) has depicted postmodernism as an "... empty quest for pleasure, property, and power" (p. 10). West's believes his transcendent world views of humanity and theology are antithetical to the precepts of postmodern ideas, and so are held up to ridicule. West is not alone in his thinking. The discomfort caused by postmodern ideas runs deep across liberal and conservative cultural thinkers who pull back from its leadership consequences. At the extreme, who would willingly lead the field of educational leadership into a cultural war? Certainly not Neil Postman who in End of Education (1996) writes in the style of postmodernism: "To be able to hold comfortably in one's mind the validity and usefulness of two contradictory truths is the source of tolerance, openness, and most importantly, a sense of humor, which is the greatest enemy of fanaticism" (p. 11). Yet, he pulls back from this postmodern turn in

the very next sentence: "Nonetheless, it is undoubtably better to have one profound truth, one god, one narrative, then to have none."

Why retreat? Would forging ahead lead to a future worse than what we have currently? That, of course, is one possibility inherent in a postmodern agenda. But the logic is faulty. That is, the opposite of a known truth is not no truth, but rather an unknown truth. The former is pessimistic and nihilistic; an unknown truth is adventurous and hopeful that we can build better futures. So the next leadership question becomes, what are professional educators willing to risk in their careers to discover unknown truths?

Those of us who have lived through the decade of the 60s know from experiences the consequences of pulling back. Many of the social gains in human, civil, and women's rights are once again challenged in the 90s. Throughout the 20th century, the concept of human progress has been questioned by ongoing world events. The leadership substitute response is to not pull back, but rather to persist and argue that consequences of destabilizing knowledge and power will not destroy "what is" without reconstructing something better. Why should educational leadership settle for what is already known? If one is still searching for a reason to embrace postmodern educational leadership research, then the response here returns to the teaching of risk defined as the courage to seek and accept alternative points of view as part of educational leadership practice. Should we wait for current conditions to improve in order to reduce our risk of taking actions? Or, do we proceed intellectually through research and practice along uncertain paths? These questions are the same for all educators regardless of our roles as teachers, researchers, leaders, editors, or publishers. I would argue that educational leaders who have been prepared to act under radically contingent conditions of uncertainty will be pragmatically better able to take advantage of educational and political

opportunities when working under rationally imposed conditions.

3. The most insidious reactions to postmodern perspectives arise from historical pendulum swings from era to era. This cyclical view of history is more than a retreat out of ignorance or fear of consequences. It is reactionary. If postmodernism is defined as a dangerous ideology of relativism, pessimism, and permissiveness, there arises for many the need for a religious revival, a place to seek comfort in certain knowledge or faith to be found in transcendent ideas and holistic systems. Today we are witnessing these reactionary strategies on different levels: a return to fundamentalist principles of right and wrong, of good and evil, of simple moral principles, justified intellectually as a neo-luddite perspective (Himmelfarb, November, 1996), justified politically as conservative truth [Rush Limbaugh, Pat Buchananan, William Bennett, Kenneth Starr], justified religiously as good and evil [Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson] and justified popularly in the media as parenthood and THE NUCLEAR FAMILY [Dr. Laura]. Postmodernism has been made into the villain, the reason for a breakdown in society's morals, uncivil discourse, and for the disrespect shown for our institutions.

The irony is that postmodern educational leadership itself is not a "post" reaction to modern principles, but rather a perspective based on new beginnings, questioning the hegemony of any idea or program. It is not a reaction to what has come before, but rather an acceptance and tension creating by working inside the present and past in order to help create a better future. Postmodernism is an ongoing reality, not a recent reactionary response.

What then is a postmodern educational leadership's response to absolute ideas and certain knowledge? Not, I hope, to construct another pendulum swing, an angry, reactive, and amoral <u>quid</u>

pro quo response. There are many postmodern responses, some philosophical, some political, some socio-cultural, some aesthetic, and some empirical -- the ideas advanced by my colleagues on this symposium.[12] But when I look inside of my work for a response, I think it best to be honest, to admit to what I don't know, and to continue seeking out knowledge as a researcher. I see no justification in talking, teaching, or writing as if I had answers or that my answers were preferable to others'. I would rather share my questions as well as my answers as best I can and then trust *all the rest* to future re-interpretations. To borrow one of Neil Postman's narratives, a Fallen Angel serves educators better by reminding us we are not infallible.

As I come to what is only the second or third ending of this paper, I think again of Socrates' defense. He was accused of teaching false gods and corrupting the youth of Athens. One of the charges was that he deliberately made the weaker argument the stronger. I have already pleaded guilty to that. I continue to struggle with constructs such as managerial control, discretion, geopolitical storylines, practitioner knowledge, contexts of partial truths, multiple urban moral discourses, and private conversations. My work is open-ended and indeterminate, containing ellipses and unfinished thoughts. How can such practices can be incorporated into developing new conceptions of educational leadership practice? Yet I do not yet have a better [read as "stronger"] way to challenge conventional thinking than to teach and research the everyday lives of students, teachers, and administrators and parents.

The historical ending to Socrates' powerful narrative, however, can be read as being very *un*postmodern: Socrates chose to die for his fixed principles [buttressed by his theology of an

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[12]Session 11.24. Is Postmodern Research in Educational Administration an Oxymoron? (Division A, AERA), Fenwick English, Spencer Maxcy, Louis Miron, Gert Biesta, Gary L. Anderson, and Gail Furman-Brown.

afterlife]-- and thus, betrayed his humility and human-ness. Yet, his philosophical life was very postmodern, teaching in the streets on whatever topics others claimed expertise. He was not vested in the current system[s] nor afraid to offend. He was a pest -- a perfectly good educational leadership word. Postmodern educational leadership offers courage, teaching us how to construct alternative, oxymoronic narratives outside the mainstream, but which must travel through today's construction of both stronger and weaker arguments -- in between-the-lines.[13]

[13]FYI: The most recent version of this essay was saved as pomores11.

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